

## Response to Supplementary Questions

1. Can you outline for the Committee how language learning can improve health outcomes and ultimately life expectancy? P. 4 transcript
2. Can you provide some information to the Committee on how increasing the investment in language learning can result in stronger communities using New Zealand as an example? P. 4 transcript

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages have intricate explanations for the immediate environment and interpersonal relationships developed over an extremely long period of time which ultimately form part of knowledge systems, culture and learned behaviours (Kemp et al 2012; Turk et al 2012).

Although not the only protective factor that contributes to a good start in life and healthy growth over a life span, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages is a key fundamental element for healthy growth over a person's life span and overall community outcomes that lacks any substantial investment and is notably missing from COAG initiatives.

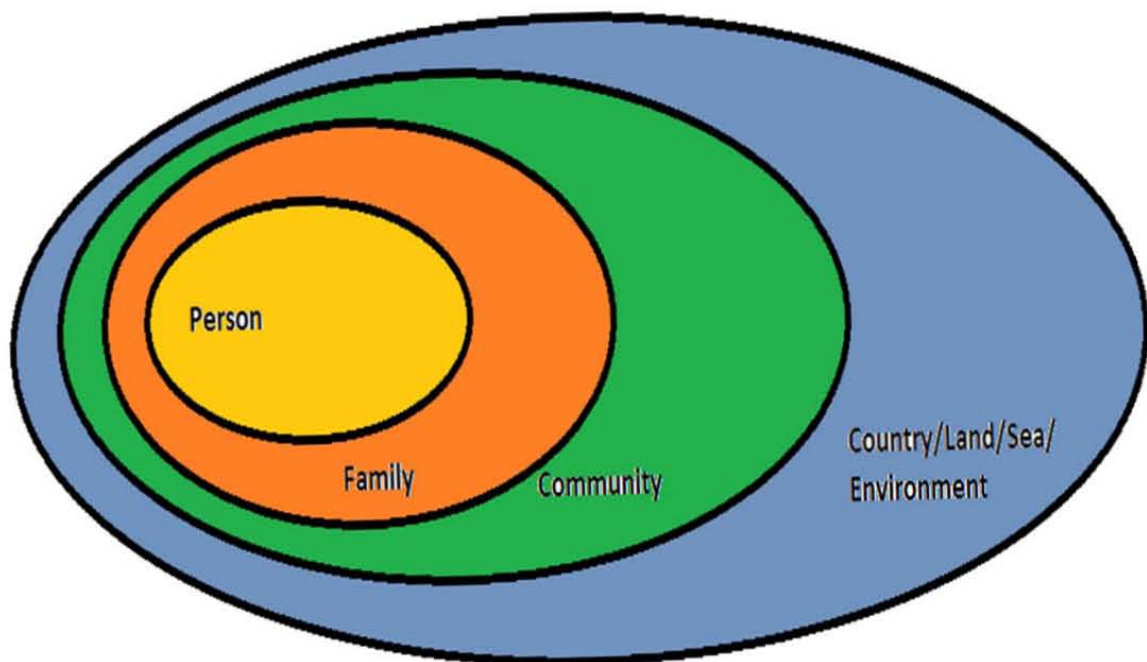


Figure 1 – Adapted Social –Ecological Model for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population health and development, includes Country/Environment. This figure shows the overall interrelationship between individuals and community and their environment. Language describes a person's understanding and provides a means for communication with family – community – environment. Language is the conduit to engage, participate, hold intrinsic value/meaning, aid in working together/coordinate use of resources including human resources; uptake/access services and resources.

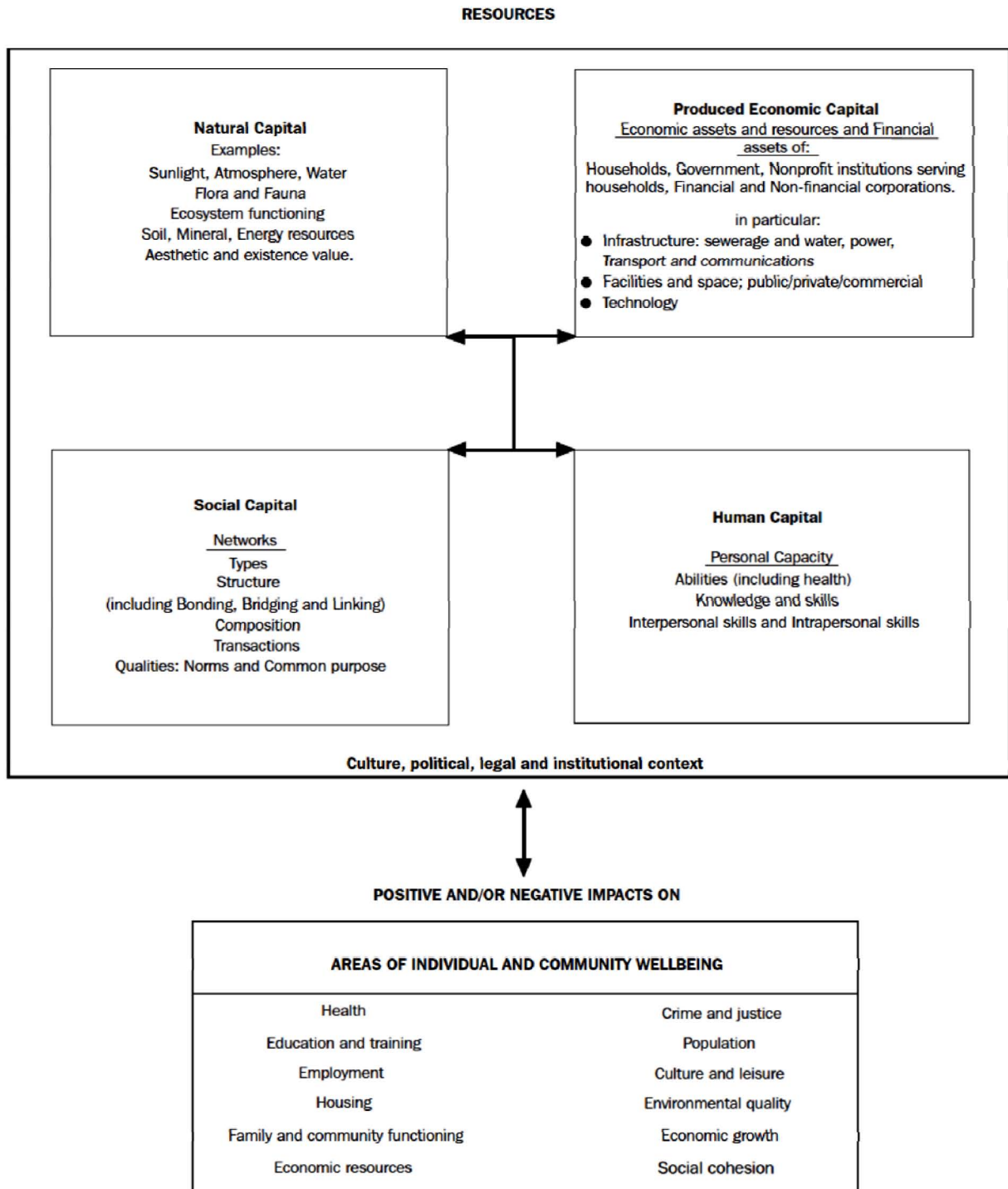


Figure 2 is a more detailed description of the relationships shown in figure 1 on the previous page. This figure highlights the effect of language upon individual and community wellbeing (ABS 2004:13). For example, language is part of Human Capital - interpersonal skills and intrapersonal skills; and Social Capital – Qualities: Norms and Common purpose, which have a positive and/or negative impact on areas of individual and community wellbeing.

Both figures illustrate language as a fundamental protective factor within community development and social capital measures.

Unlike most other outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages within each of these sectors is under-resourced and more importantly undervalued as a fundamental protective factor and key investment point across all sectors.

### *Individual Health*

Language needs to be strategically and adequately resourced for proper holistic approach to addressing social determinants that impact upon a person's optimal health. Language and communication are fundamental protective factors in early childhood development and throughout the life span.

Nancy Cohen author of "The impact of language development on the psychosocial and emotional development of young children" gives a concise description of how language and communication impacts upon health throughout a person's lifespan. Language and communication has implications for prevention, intervention, education and public policy. Cohen explains language and communicative competence provide critical tools for learning, engaging in social relationships, and behaviour and emotion regulation from infancy onward.

From infancy onward, language and psychosocial and emotional development are interrelated. Potential problems that begin in relationships with parents can ultimately spiral as children enter school and have difficulty learning and getting along with teachers and peers. Language competence is critical for both school readiness and psychosocial and emotional adjustment, problems with language and communication can set a child on a maladaptive trajectory throughout life (Moffit, 1993).

Even if language is acquired later in life it can instill a sense of wellbeing and belonging for many Indigenous people who have lost ties to their culture (NIT 25/1/2007 p.13).

Language interrelates with connection to family, community and Country. Evidence shows connection to family, community and Country as protective factors to reduce adverse social and emotional wellbeing, as described by Zubik et al., (2010):

"Protective factors can be effective by reducing the exposure to risk, or compensatory, by reducing the effect of risk factors (Rutter, 1985). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural concepts such as connection to land, culture, spirituality, ancestry and family and community are commonly identified by Indigenous Australian people as protective factors, which can serve as sources of resilience and can moderate the impact of stressful circumstances on social and emotional wellbeing at an individual, family and community level. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, these factors can serve as a unique reservoir of strength and recovery when faced with adversity (Kelly et al., 2009)."

Throughout the 2007 International Symposium on the Social Determinants of Indigenous Health Report, language was mentioned as a barrier to planning and delivering community controlled health services, and community services such as purchasing equipment, and communicating the need for such programs with government or corporate sector. The symposium also highlighted how

language is intrinsic to individual health, 'perhaps the most crucial factor is the breakdown in traditional social structures, of culture and of language.' In such circumstances, transmission of cultural and linguistic meaning may improve health and well being .

### *Policy, Services and Community Development*

Language impairment, has an impact on academic and psychosocial and emotional functioning, this leads to implications for health, mental health, child care, education and youth justice systems (Cohen N 2005, Cohen E et al 2012, Mare et al 2012).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language describes and is the basis of relationships with kinship, interpersonal relationships, and our immediate environment (Kemp et al 2012; Turk et al 2012). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages describe landscape and interpersonal relationships, developing shared understanding, and coordinating relationships to meet needs, such as safety, individual learning, and resource or economic use.

Bi-lingual education in schools, and incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in vocational training and everyday business of other sectors improves thinking and logic – the skill set and ability to apply Indigenous Knowledges and Western understandings, flexibility and creative thought (high order thinking) and reduces cognitive dissonance.

Currently underlying cognitive dissonance inhibits either intentionally or unintentionally the development skill set to adapt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture with Western Culture. This unique skill set is part of individual and organisational adaptiveness or resilience and development. From a very young age, individual thought process development is based upon values and belief systems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, in early childhood during developmental milestones conflicts with, western values and methods, leading to cognitive dissonance either astutely or subtly. Either case is not allowing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander humans to reach their optimal functioning, or enjoying an environment which promotes this basic human right.

An overt example of cultural conflict is minimal investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, Knowledges, culture, which is highly valued in home/community life, and the perception or actual shows minimal genuine value by Western society upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, Knowledges and culture.

This basis for cognitive congruence, is taken for granted within a dominant culture, where their culture and identity are not systematically questioned at any age in their lifespan let alone from early development.

Language is a key asset within all areas of service provision, and enabling tool within core business. At present, language is seen as a separate program or policy area. Language is not recognised as being used in everyday business and core part of any service delivery. Some commercial sectors have seen the necessity to invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in order to improve profit margins, and increase productivity, such as mining companies teaching non-Indigenous workers basic APY language using an on-line teaching tool.

Given a solid foundation in language competence helps with attainment of education qualification which is linked with employment throughout life.

Whether school level, vocational training, or in house throughout employment, use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language reduces barriers and improves access to both the services they provide and employment within services/production.

Better access to vocational and on the job training leads to better service provision, more efficiency and productivity.

More employment leads to an increase of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees uptaking managerial and decision-making positions which in turn improves links and networks with non-Indigenous institutes such as, universities; and government departments. Relationships with institutes being a key measure of community development and social capital (Mignone 2003). Ultimately contributing to guidelines of better practice, benchmarking and influencing contemporary practice. Especially progressing equitable interface and genuine sharing between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practice and western practice with cognitive congruence in time.

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#### *Abstract*

*No other book has widely explored the topic of the neuropsychology of communication from both cognitive and neuropsychological perspectives. This integrated perspective makes the contribution highly innovative and unique within the recent scientific field. Moreover, methodological contribution of new neuropsychological techniques was exhaustively considered for the first time by the book.*

*The volume focuses on the neuropsychological correlates of communication in daily interactions. The predominant account in explaining the construction of meaning by humans is the inter-relational perspective, which postulates an intentional convergence of meaning arising as a consequence of the active exchanges between people. The neural correlates of communication are described on the basis of new empirical results, with particular focus on language and language development, pragmatics and neuropragmatics of communication, neurocognition and the cognitive bases of intentions, nonverbal communication and emotion contribution to communicative systems. In addition, new methodological approaches are described,*

*such as neuroimaging (PET and fMRI), and brain stimulation techniques (MEG and TMS), as well as their applications in research and in the clinical field.*

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